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ABSTRACT

The major objective of the persent research was to determine the degree of commitment to community service in the area of health related social problems on the part of public community colleges. Specifically, the study sought to determine if these institutions have a responsibility for assisting in the amelioration of health-related problems. The author examines a number of sources including "The Junior College Journal", statements from the President's Commission on Higher Education, and data from a national study on the extension of college services and expertise to the community, and concludes that there is considerable support for the direct involvement of the community college in the community. Further, the issue of community health concerns and health-related social problems receives noticeable citation in regard to the involvement of the two-year college. While there is little mention of the financial resources needed for support of such activities the continual appearance of this philosophical position implies a degree of monetary commitment. (Author/SES)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES, HEALTH-RELATED SOCIAL PROBLEMS, AND THE COMMUNITY SERVICES FUNCTION*

by Donald Dean Nichols, Ph.D.

In the annals of higher education there has been much debate over the role and function of institutions in relationship to their surrounding communities. Much of the controversy has centered on whether institutions of higher learning should be insular or take a "societal view," (serve the society as a whole through direct involvement).[1] One of the objectives of the present research was to determine the degree of commitment to community service on the part of public community colleges in the area of health-related social problems. Principally, do these institutions have a responsibility for assisting in the amelioration of health-related problems, according to respondents' opinions.

There is an abundant supply of statements in support of the community services function in the literature of two-year institutions. In the first issue of the Junior College Journal, Ricciardi[2] defined a community college:

> A fully organized junior college aims to meet the needs of the community in which it is located, including preparation for institutions of higher education, liberal arts education

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[1] Earl J. McGrath, ed., Universal Higher Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1966), p.ix.

[2] Nicholas Ricciardi, "Vital Junior College Problems in California," Junior College Journal, Vol. I, No. I (October, 1930), p.24.

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*Speech given at the American College Personnel Association Conference, Cleveland, Ohio: May, 1973.

> for those who are not going beyond graduation from the junior college, vocational training for particular occupations usually designated as semi-professional vocations, and short courses for adults with special interest.

Almost two decades later, the President's Commission on Higher Education recognized the multi-purpose aspect of these institutions:

> Whatever form the community college takes, its purpose is educational services to the entire community, and this purpose requires of it a variety of functions and programs. It will provide college education for the youth of the community certainly, so as to remove geographic and economic barriers to educational opportunity and discover individual talents at low cost and easy access. But in addition, the community college will serve as an active center of adult education. It will attempt to meet the total post-high school needs of its community.[3]

Fields[4] claims that the community college is "committed by philosophy to specific purposes of serving all members of the community." Reynolds[5] states that the two-year college has become a community service agency. Johnson[6]

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[3] President's Commission on Higher Education, op. cit., pp.67-68.

[4] Ralph R. Fields, The Community College Movement (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1962), p.90.

[5] James W. Reynolds, An Analysis of Community Service Programs in Junior Colleges (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, 1960), p.24.

[6] B. Lamar Johnson, "Emerging Concept Points to the Future," Junior College Journal, 25 (April, 1955), p.484.

notes that one of the distinguishing characteristics of these institutions is educational programs designed to serve the needs of their community and to utilize community resources in program planning and development. A reciprocal relationship of interdependence and cooperation is emphasized by Thornton [7] in his definition of the college as a "community institution." And, Barnes [8] provided several reasons why the community college is uniquely adapted to help solve community problems and included expertise of college faculty and staff.

The nature and scope of a program of community services is enunciated in the 55th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education:

> The values of college service to the community... include increasing the productive efficiency of agriculture and industry, improving the functioning of communities and community organizations, contributing to the health and physical well-being of citizens, and enriching the cultural, aesthetic, and moral life of the community. [9]

Service to the community beyond offering collegiate degree and certificate programs, according to Myran, [10] has long been a major objective of the

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[7] Thornton, op. cit., p.35.

[8] J.B. Barnes, "The Community College's Newest Obligation," Junior College Journal, 28 (January, 1958), pp.247-250.

[9] Nelson B. Henry, ed., The Public Junior College, 55th Yearbook, National Society for the Study of Education (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p.72.

[10] Gunder A. Myran, Community Services in the Community College (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Junior Colleges, 1970), p.2.

community college. Shaw and Cummiskey [11] state that educational writers have long held that a junior college becomes a community college "when its multiple goals reflect the needs and directions of its community." To have a viable community services function, Harlacher believes that an institution must endorse a set of principles, one of which is: "The community college recognizes its responsibility as a catalyst in community development and improvement." [12] He included the following in a list of services to be offered:

> mutual aid for meeting college-community needs; community-experience programs; community study and reasearch problems; public affairs education; specialized community services including the subcategories of economic conditions, public education, health, cultural and recreational activities, and conservation; community development, community participation and leadership training; use of mass media of communication; public relations programs, community use of school plant; and formal adult education programs. [13]

Innumerable statements by the American Association of Junior Colleges have endorsed the community services function of the community college. In

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[11] Nathan C. Shaw and J. Kenneth Cummiskey, Community Involvement: A Leadership Responsibility for Community Services (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Junior Colleges, 1970), p.2.

[12] Ervin L. Harlacher, "California's Community Renaissance," Junior College Journal, 34 (April, 1964), p.15.

[13] _____, Effective Junior College Programs of Community Services: Rationale, Guidelines, and Practices, Occasional Report No. 10, Junior College Leadership Program (Los Angeles: School of Education, University of California, Los Angeles, 1967), p.21.

1963, spokesmen claimed that "it is the aim of the AAJC to stimulate ideas and mobilize resources by which problems national in scope can be identified and solved." [14] For example, Wilson [15] suggested several activities that community colleges could sponsor or conduct to help galvanize consumer support for improved health services. Colleges could hold seminars, workshops, and conduct surveys on the health care delivery systems in their local communities.

In addition to support from the AACJC, state and federal governmental officials have supported programs for expanding this function. One recent U.S. Commissioner of Education stated that the community college "can be one of our most valuable resources for helping to solve the larger problems of our society." [16]

A taxonomy of community services functions has been developed by Raines [17] which includes three major categories: Self Development Functions,

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[14] "Training for Health Occupations," Junior College Journal, 33 (March, 1963), p.6. See also: Edmund J. Gleazer, This Is the Community College (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968).

[15] Richard E. Wilson, "Right to Health Security," Junior College Journal, 41 (June/July, 1971), p.7.

[16] James E. Allen, Jr., "The Community College and the Office of Education's Goals," Speech given at Annual Meeting of the National Council of State Directors of Community-Junior Colleges, Williamsburg, Virginia, November 10, 1969. Mimeographed.

[17] Max R. Raines, A Community Services Inventory for Community Colleges (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1969).

Community Development Functions, and Program Development Functions. Within these categories, the taxons relevant to the present study are defined by Raines as follows:

> Social Outreach Function: Organizing programs to increase the earning power, educational level, and political influence of disadvantaged; e.g., ADC mothers, unemployed males, educationally deprived youth, welfare recipients.
>
> Community Analysis Function: Collecting and analyzing significant data which reflect existing and emerging needs of the community and which can serve as a basis for developing the community service program of the college; e.g., analyzing census tracts, analyzing manpower data, conducting problem solving studies, identifying roles and goals of organizations.
>
> Civic Action Function: Participating in cooperative efforts with local government, business, industry, professions, religious and social groups to increase the resources of the community to deal with major problems confronting the community, e.g., community self-studies, urban beautification, community chest drives, air pollution.[18]

According to Raines,[19] these activities will help colleges respond to citizens who are expecting the institution to take a leadership role in solving pressing social problems. His taxonomy is similar to two major program objectives developed by Harlacher:

> To provide educational services which utilize the special skills and knowledge of the college staff and other experts and are designed to assist groups and the college-district

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[18] Ibid., p.41.

[19] Max R. Raines, "Community Services," in O'Banion and Thurston, op. cit., p.147.

> community-at-large in long-range planning to solve their problems.
>
> To contribute to and promote the cultural, intellectual, and social life of the college district community and to develop skills for the profitable use of leisure time. [20]

Harlacher, [21] Myran, [22] and other writers also support the participation of the college staff in community life in the role of catalysts. Although there has been no comprehensive study of junior college students' attitudes toward community involvement, the Carnegie Commission surveyed 70,000 undergraduates and found that 67 per cent of the students believed that "colleges should have a responsibility for helping solve the social problems of society." [23] However, Lombardi [24] cautions against community services projects diverting funds from the regular instructional program.

Some data on the extension of college services and expertise to the community was collected by Matson[25] in a national study. It was found that almost three-fifths of the colleges reported that some student personnel services are presently provided to non-student members of the community. The most frequently provided services were counseling and testing. Colleges reporting no plans to extend services to the community constituted 20 per cent of the total group

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[20] Harlacher, Effective Junior College Programs, op. cit., p.23.

[21] Ibid., pp.44 and 69-74.

[22] Myran, op. cit., pp.44-45. See also: McConnell, op. cit., p.91; and Burton R. Clark, The Open Door College (New York: Harper and Row, 1959).

[23] Kerr, op. cit., p.9.

[24] Lombardi, op. cit., p.21.

[25] Matson, op. cit., p.52.

as compared with eighteen per cent where such plans are in progress. Matson concluded that "data from this study do not indicate any large 'groundswell' toward the extension of student personnel functions to the non-student community."

In summarizing various dimensions of community services for the future, Harlacher believed that, with adequate funding, colleges would be involved.

1. The community college will develop aggressive outreach programs designed to extend its campus throughout the entire college district.

2. The community college will place increased emphasis on community education of all age levels and all age groups.

3. The community college will utilize a greater diversification of media in meeting community needs and interests.

4. The community college will increasingly utilize its catalytic capabilities to assist its community in the solution of basic educational, economic, political, and social problems.

5. The community college will be increasingly concerned about the cultural growth of its community and state.

6. The community college will place greater emphasis on interaction with its community.

7. The community college will increasingly recognize the need for cooperation with other community and regional agencies.[26]

In line with these trends, Cohen[27] predicts that the paradigm 1979

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[26] Ervin L. Harlacher, The Community Dimension of the Community College (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), pp.70-107.

[27] Arthur M. Cohen, Dateline '79: Heretical Concepts for the Community College (Beverly Hills, California: Glencoe Press, 1969), p.16.

community college campus will move into its surrounding towns and effectively deal with community problems.

From literature on the community services function of the community college, it may be concluded that there is considerable support for direct involvement in the local community. The issue of community health concerns and health-related social problems receives noticeable citation in regard to the two-year college's involvement. While there is little mention of the financial resources needed for supporting such activities, the preponderant appearance of this philosophical position implies a degree of commitment.

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